

SNF Project exceeds fuel movement goals in FY 2001

Michele Gerber, FH

The Spent Nuclear Fuel Project exceeded its goal of removing 25 Multi-Canister Overpacks, or MCOs, of fuel from the K West Basin when it removed the 27th MCO on Sept. 26.

The 27 MCOs held about 122 tons of irradiated uranium, and 4.05 million curies of radioactivity were removed from the Columbia River shoreline. That fuel-removal pace also exceeded the Hanford “scorecard” commitment to move 116 metric tons of fuel in fiscal year 2001.

Bob Heck, Fluor Hanford vice president for the SNF Project, congratulated project workers. “Getting and staying ahead of schedule in fiscal year 2001 puts us in an excellent position for the coming years,” said Heck. “We’ve refined our processes and are poised to ramp up production in FY 2002 in order to meet our Tri-Party Agreement milestone of removing all spent fuel by July 31, 2004. It’s going to be a tough schedule, but we’re ready.”

Hanford’s spent nuclear fuel is dried in the Cold Vacuum Drying facility in the 100K Area. Since fuel drying began in December 2000, the facility has reduced the average process time significantly. Project estimates had been roughly 90 hours per MCO door-to-door — but 10 of the last 13 MCOs were completed sooner and more efficiently.

Additionally, this past year the SNF Project completed important steps in its mission to consolidate all site-wide spent fuel. The project recently completed a Standard Startup Review to begin the transport and acceptance of 72 irradiated fuel assemblies from the Shippingport, Pa., reactor. The assemblies are in wet storage in Hanford’s T Plant. After the successful completion of an Operational Readiness Review at T Plant, the fuel will be dried and moved to interim safe storage in the Canister Storage Building.

Last winter, the SNF Project, incorporating suggestions from K East Basin operators, health physics technicians and other facility staff members, proposed the

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Tony Diaz, Fluor Hanford health physics technician, checks radiation levels at the top of an MCO filled with spent fuel in the Cold Vacuum Drying facility.



Employees celebrate 3 million safe work hours at a safety luncheon in July.

Other SNF Project accomplishments

- The SNF Project has now reached nearly 3.3 million work hours without a workday lost because of an injury.
- In July, for the second year in a row, the SNF Project was rated “excellent” in all of the criteria evaluated by quality assurance auditors from DOE’s National SNF Program.
- Over the summer, the project installed and began operating two new process tables in the K West Basin.
- Project staff members fabricated more than 850 fuel baskets during FY 2001, and accepted delivery of 82 MCOs from a vendor under strict quality controls.

SNF Project exceeds fuel movement goals in FY 2001, cont.

Alternate Fuel Transfer Strategy to the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office. In this plan, which was formally adopted by DOE and regulators in late March, K East Basin fuel will be transferred into the K West Basin for processing, avoiding extensive equipment installations in the K East Basin. A Tri-Party Agreement milestone has just been met for completion of the designs and plans for basin modifications required for the Fuel Transfer System.

Many challenges lie ahead as the SNF Project begins FY 2002. These challenges include accelerating fuel loading, removal and processing, maintaining safety, building the fuel transfer modifications into both basins, installing and testing the sludge/water system in the K East Basin, cleaning thousands of canisters and moving them to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, fabricating baskets and inspecting MCO deliveries, maintaining the excellent QA program, moving the Shippingport fuel and continuing preparations for sludge removal.

"I know that together we can meet these challenges, just as we have met our huge challenges in the past," Heck told employees. "Removing this fuel is important work. I am proud of each one of you, and once again I want to say thank you for a job well done in FY 2001." ♦